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MAN's BEST RIGHT;

A

SOLEMN APPEAL

IN THE NAME OF

RELIGION.

BY THE REV R. NARES, A.M.
CHAPLAIN TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF YORK,
LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXON.

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MAN's BEST RIGHT.

IT seems to be a common doctrine at the present day, that men who will relinquish Rights, are not only to be considered as unwise, but culpable. It has, therefore, been most strangely made a point of duty to fight, to die, to murder, and to persecute, for the sake of Natural or Civil Rights, some of which, if true, are of very late discovery, and still are held, by many of the wisest men, to be not only false, but in the highest degree pernicious; not *Rights*, but *Wrongs*.

By a common mode of exaggeration, these doubtful or destructive Rights have been termed *sacred*; and we have heard such strange, absurd, and horrid phrases as, THE SACRED RIGHT of INSURRECTION. Thus, by the abuse of terms, an act is consecrated, which the most dire neces-

sity alone can render pardonable; and men are led to have recourse, for trifling causes, to the most calamitous, and what should ever be the most reluctant effort of mere self-defence; an effort bringing on the worst condition, and perhaps the dissolution, of society.

But what is most afflicting to a pious mind is this, that while these Rights, whether true or false, yet at the best but worldly and temporary, are praised by some, and too destructively pursued by others, a Right most properly called HOLY, a Right connected with Eternity, is forgotten by too many, and by some despised.

I speak of that BEST RIGHT of MAN, which, after being forfeited by Sin, was given again, upon enlarged conditions, by infinite Benevolence; the Right, or rather Privilege, of being CANDIDATE FOR HEAVEN.

In speaking of this, not natural, but heavenly Right, I fear not, GOD be praised, either the contempt or the obloquy of those whose grovelling happiness it is to have no Right beyond the limits of this world: who choose to mingle with the dust on equal terms, and desire to be no better than the Beasts, conscious that they may deserve, perhaps, to be no better than the Devils.

It

It is my happiness that I address this Warning to A NATION of CHRISTIANS, consequently to a People by whom the Sacred Right which I describe is known and valued; to a People among whom, though the few that are seduced by vain Philosophy, may scoff and scorn, yet far the greater part, instructed by the Scriptures, will be prepared to feel the truth. It is not, therefore, my design to prove the grant of such a Right, of which the Gospel is the authentic conveyance, but to remind my Readers how entirely incompatible it is with many that are now asserted, and more especially with all the wrath, and violence, and rage with which they are pursued.

I surely might appeal, even to such persons as admit no principles but those of human morality, to decide whether it be more amiable to say, "I will exact my Rights, or whatever I may choose to fancy, or to call my Rights, however doubtful, at any hazard; and at the expence of any miseries to Society;—I will assist in making experiments on the happiness and lives of millions, for the sake of mere opinions;—I will ruin the present generation for the sake of a supposed advantage to posterity, which, after all, posterity may perhaps abhor;" or, on the other hand, in behalf of peace, humanity, or social unity, to wave the question of strict Rights;—to seek the duties

rather than the claims of men;—and to make the best of such mixed good, as on the common terms of human life we can obtain. Vain is their pursuit, who are led on by viewing phantoms of false perfection through the organs of distempered Fancy; and, if carried on by cruel means, detestable as well as vain.

Very different is the Christian Privilege to which I call your notice, under the title of MAN'S BEST RIGHT. In value, beyond all estimation; and in the appointed means of gaining it, productive only of universal good.

For its value, we may thus consider it. Man is a being formed with very strong desires, the chief of which are fixed on life and happiness. If then, by any means, he can obtain a privilege which shall extend to everlasting life and perfect happiness, all other Rights must sink to less than nothing in the competition.

When therefore in pursuit of Rights, imaginary, or even real, but relating only to a narrow span of being, we see men daringly transgressing the most sacred Laws of Justice and Humanity, and all that possibly can be imagined to connect us with a better species of existence, what can we conclude, but that they are men addicted to the present

present world alone, without all hope beyond it? or at least forgetful of that hope, and in their forgetfulness or unbelief, without all feeling of Religion, especially of such Religion as the Christian? Conformably to this opinion, we find, upon enquiry, that the men most forward at this hour to do all acts of violence for certain Claims, which they call Rights, or to defend such acts in writing, are men without Religion.*

Men who have Religion, let not Infidels delude you! Consider both the loss and gain that wait on your decision. By the Christian Dispensation, in which you are believers, the Right of being Candidates for Heaven is freely offered to you. A Right I call it, in compliance with the current language, and because men seem to think at present that Rights are by all means to be asserted; but if a natural Right be valuable, this is infinitely more so. It is a favour and a privilege beyond the hopes of Nature, above all Rights that we could

* Take the assertion of this fact, in the words of one of their defenders, Mr. MACKINTOSH. "That the majority of the Advocates for the French Revolution were not so, (*i. e.* Dissenters) was, indeed, sufficiently known to their enemies. They were well known to be *Philosophers*, and *Friends of Humanity, who were superior to the creed of any sect, and indifferent to the dogmas of any popular faith.*" *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, p. 375. Mr. M. doubtless speaks from his own knowledge, and of himself.

possibly have claimed; and offered by the free benevolence of him who gave us all our natural Rights. By Nature man can have no Right to be immortal, still less to gain an immortality of Happiness; but through Religion, if he fulfil the terms prescribed, he has this most transcendant Right; a Right conceded to him, a plea, to which the Judge of Heaven and Earth will listen and assent.

But are there then Conditions? We all well know there are;—and such as by their goodness mark their origin: full of true good-will towards men: well worthy of benevolence that knows no bounds or imperfection.

If then the natural Rights concluding on this side the grave, are recommended to be asserted by the violation of all these Conditions, or the most important of them, the decision, in the mind of a Christian, should be very easy. He cannot hesitate to sacrifice the present to the future: the present trifling object, for the future infinite advantage.

In the case of the most perfect and undoubted human Rights, this reasoning is decisive. Better were it, could there be occasion, to relinquish all of them; better throughout life to suffer wrong,

wrong, and groan beneath oppression, than to seek redress by means which God hath not permitted. What says the Scripture, in the strongest case that can be put, the case of Slavery ?—"Servants (that is, *Slaves*, for such were all the Servants of those times), be subject to your Masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward;—for this is thank-worthy, if a man *for conscience towards God* endure grief, suffering wrong."—1. *Pet.* ii. 18, 20.

It may be required then in certain cases, to suffer undoubted violence and wrong, rather than disturb the established order of Society; it is required of individuals *always*, with respect to private wrongs: and even of collective bodies, which have larger privileges, as having power to regulate the whole order of Society, it is required that they should more regard the Will of God, his general Laws of Justice, Humanity, and Christian Benevolence, than any fancies that may happen to arise among them concerning various modes of modelling the form of their Communities.

To the claim of whole Communities to do whatever they may wish, and to fulfil those wishes by any means whatever, the Christian will therefore listen with great caution. Others may

look no further than the command of Multitudes, and conclude their notion of propriety under the Sovereign Will of a People: he will look higher, to the SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD, and esteem nothing lawful, even for infinite numbers to enjoin, that evidently is inconsistent with His Attributes or Laws. He must be satisfied that what is called a Right, deserves that name, before he ventures to pursue it; he must then be satisfied also, that the means by which it will be sought are just and lawful, or he will yet regard it as forbidden.

It is strange that, in all the clamour lately made concerning Rights, no one has sufficiently adverted to the primary intention of the word, or to the general nature of the thing. What is a *Right?* This is a question that we must be able to resolve in general, before we can decide upon specific Claims.

A RIGHT belongs, inseparably, to the great and universal moral distinction of *Right* and *Wrong*. It means a Claim founded in natural justice; something that is fit and proper. Thus, "I have a Right to do this," means the same as "it is right that I should do it;" and if that cannot be asserted, undoubtedly the Claim is false. A Right to do what is wrong is therefore a direct

direct absurdity, an absolute contradiction in terms; it is asserting at one time, and of the same thing, that it is *right* and *wrong*, just and unjust, proper and improper.

This, clear as it is, is what those confused heads have not perceived, or those designing Writers have purposely confounded, who have not been able or not willing to distinguish *Power* from *Right*. On the confusion of these very separate things, is founded all that notion of THE GENERAL WILL, that has misled so many, and the opinion vaunted so triumphantly, though so falsely, of its right to be obeyed: the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People, and the supposed crime of resisting their Will. The doctrine is, that whatever a whole People choose to do among themselves, they have a Right to do; that is to say, "*It is right that they should do it.*" What then, if the thing be in its own nature wrong?—If we would defend their supposed Right, we must return to the absurdity just now exposed, and say, "It is *right* that they should do this *wrong*, because they will it." Either there are things which it is as wrong for millions to do by common agreement, as for individuals, or there is no solid and permanent distinction between right and wrong. Suppose it be their will to commit offences against God or Nature, have they therefore

fore a Right to do it? Have they a Right to perjure themselves, to blaspheme God, to commit enormities too gross to mention? Undoubtedly not. To Myriads, in the same manner as to one, do Right and Wrong remain distinguished everlastingly. Of *Power*, in either case, the Laws of Nature form the only limit; of *Right*, the boundaries are fixed by the eternal differences of Good and Evil. Hear how a Heathen could assert the everlasting obligations of Morality against the Edict of a King; and the same will hold with equal force against the Edict of a Multitude.—Why, says the King, do you not obey my commands? The reply is,

> Because this Edict came not forth from Jove,
> Nor Justice, blest assessor of the Gods,
> Who settled and defin'd these Laws to Man.
> Nor have thy Proclamations such effect,
> That from th' unwritten and unchang'd decrees
> Of Heaven, a Mortal should presume to swerve:
> For these * not recently arose, but live
> From Times untrac'd, to Ages without end.
>
> SOPH. ANTIG.

If mere Natural Reason could so justly place this class of obligations, what should a Christian feel concerning them?

* In a general sense, she means the Law of Piety to Relations; in a particular one, she alludes to the National Opinions of Greece concerning Funerals.

We

We know, and ought to recollect what Scripture has determined concerning the General Will of Multitudes, when contrary to that of God. We know when it was the General Will of Israel to have a King, how God expressed his indignation. We know what vengeance fell upon that People for their collective acts: for disobedience in the Wilderness, for public worship paid to Idols, and finally, for the great crime which formally they took upon themselves, the Murder of the Holy One of Israel.

This then is the great point concealed so carefully by those who would mislead mankind with notions of false Rights. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF NATIONS, the Moral Duty of whole Communities taken collectively, and the impossibility that their united wishes should supersede the everlasting Laws of Right. In the dealings of the Almighty with his chosen People, we see a picture of his Providence, which must in all things be consistent; and we may be well assured, that, though we cannot with the same distinctness trace out his decisions, in other cases, he does impute to Nations all their crimes in a collective capacity; and to every individual his due share of guilt, according to the part he took in bringing on the action of the whole.

How

How can we suppose it otherwise? Can numbers change the nature of things? A resolution that in a single man would be accursed, how is it made sacred by becoming the desire of thousands? By numbers any Will may indeed be rendered irresistible, with respect to this world; but is God to be subdued by numbers? Is he to change his Laws because men change their notions? He has said expressly "*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*" (Exod. xxiii. 2.) Irresistible wickedness is thereby only made the more destructive. This circumstance therefore cannot, surely, excuse, but rather must the more condemn it. When the whole world was perverted, and their minds *were set to do only evil continually*, the accumulation of individual sins brought down the wrath of God upon them, and they perished in the Deluge. But could men have assembled then in universal Congress, and have decreed unanimously that it was their GENERAL WILL to do the things they did, would that have made them innocent? Would not such a combination rather have brought down their punishment more speedily; and caused the Judge of All to have opened sooner the windows of Heaven, and broken up the foundations of the abyss for their destruction?

But it may be said, that it is Political, not Moral Supremacy, for which men are contending; that

that they seek not a Right to annul the Laws of God, but those of Men. If then, there be no Moral Question involved in the subversion of established laws and customs, in the falsification of public faith, the annihilation of ancient tenures, the removal of the whole foundation of property and personal security, we may listen to the exception; otherwise we must continue to insist that, for their use of political power, men, few or many, are alike responsible to God.

Know, then, ye Multitudes, whom men who have thrown off Religion would corrupt with notions of imaginary Rights, that the only Right which is inestimable, that which is the subject of this Essay, that which Christ has purchased, and his Gospel offers, will be destroyed, in the first place, by insisting on such Claims as in themselves are false; or, in the second, by such blind pursuit of any, true or false, as violates the Laws of Everlasting Justice. Contempt of authorities, overthrow of laws, turbulence, and insurrection, these are Rights which are not found within the Christian Code. Envy, rage, malice, persecution, violation of property, murder, perjury, these are things which, whatever number of men may will them, must deserve the wrath of Heaven. Through paths of violence and inhumanity,

manity, whoever seeks his purposes, will find them lead him to destruction.

The best Right of Man is commanded to be sought by the best means, by peace, by unity, benevolence, and love. The pretended Rights are calculated only to arm mankind against each other. There cannot be a stronger contrast.

The Apostles of the new fanaticism of Liberty and Equality, endeavour every where to spread the dreadful flame of discord, by exciting the lower orders of society to overthrow the higher. They work upon the pride and avarice so universal in the human mind, and tell men, what they are too prone to think of themselves; that the power and wealth possessed by others, are what they ought to have, or to share. Their humanity, it seems, compassionates the distresses of the Peasant and the Labourer, oppressed, as they pretend, by the injustice of the Great. If any where they are indeed oppressed, let them, in the name of Heaven, obtain relief! In this the Christian will agree with more sincerity than those who urge it. The warmest wish of all who love their fellow-creatures is, that every where oppression should be abolished; that every yoke but that of Christ should be destroyed, and every bond broken, except those of Christian Unity. But how do they

conduct

conduct themselves, who pretend this violent compassion? The engine that they set the first to work is discontent. If they find men happy, their object is to make them otherwise; to invent grievances if none are found, or to exaggerate those that do exist; to sow the seeds of envy, rage, and malice, in the soil where they are most likely to spring up, in minds unpractised and untaught to combat strong desires.

Not to mention the false friendship that appears in making men uneasy, for the sake of giving them a slight and very doubtful chance of something like relief; of what kind, we may ask, is that Humanity that feels so much for Evils not perceived by those whom they affect, and nothing for the dreadful and accumulated miseries they are about to cause. They pity those who, born to poverty, have formed their minds accordingly, and for the most part are contented with their humble lot, frequently much happier in it than the rich with all their outward splendor. While for those who, born in affluence, and bred in hope of its continuance, are to be plunged at once into a state for which they are not only unprepared, but, by long habits totally unfitted, for these they feel no pity. A poor man debarred from a vote, to which he has in truth no natural Right; which, if he had, he might never wish to use, or

if he used, might use it only to hurt himself, is an object of most active interest, and one in whose behalf it is meritorious to overturn the world: but a rich man, driven from his home and his advantages (the man whose bounty, perhaps, cherished multitudes), plundered, stripped, banished, and reduced to misery and nakedness; or perhaps imprisoned, and led out to arbitrary slaughter, without a crime, except that he was born to wealth, or has acquired it;—without a cause to be assigned, except the change of certain opinions,—excites no feelings. By this savage cruelty, and not by cant and hypocritical pretences, judge their hearts. Humanity knows no such inconsistency; it pities all who are unfortunate, in proportion to their innocence and their misfortunes; and not by arbitrary rules, confined to classes and to ranks of men. But here, the most unhappy and most injured are unregretted; while they whose sufferings are much less, who must sometimes be told that they are miserable before they can discover it, are the objects of most tragic lamentation. Deceitful pity; tears worse than those of crocodiles! Compassion that refutes itself!

Such are the means. The consequences are worthy of them. The disunion of Society, the rupture

rupture of all ties; envy, hatred, malice, and destruction.

Behold the opposite picture. Our Saviour hath commanded, that if we would please him, we should love one another. Considerations that ought, in reason, to unite all classes of mankind are offered in his Gospel. Men are represented there as Brethren, Children of one Father, whose love is equal towards them all, or at least proportioned to their merits only, not their worldly situations. The distinctions of Rich and Poor are, according to that system, among the things appointed by Providence as the source of various duties, and the bond of mutual affections. Compassion should endear the indigent to him that is more wealthy, and gratitude attach the Poor to those who are their Benefactors. The Rich is certainly not authorized to injure or oppress the Poor, and full as little is the Poor encouraged to envy and to hate the Rich. If the Rich Man makes the weakness of the Poor the cause of further suffering to him, he is impious and inhuman; if the Poor Man seizes that by violence which is not his, he also is a gross offender. In the one case, God is the declared Defender of the Humble; in the other, the Avenger of Robbery and Wrong. For the inequalities of present advantage that these respective situations offer, the balance is to be sought,

not here, but in the future retribution. In that place where Lazarus is comforted; or there, where the neglect of his distress is punished.

If the Rich and Poor cannot live in harmony, there can be no harmony on earth; for Rich and Poor must always be, except where all are poor. All cannot possibly be rich: Idleness and Extravagance nothing can make rich, or keep so. The wealth that is obtained legally, the Law protects, and this is Justice; whoever murmurs at it, wishes only for the liberty to be unjust, and to grasp at wealth without the honest means of gaining it.—In this, and every case, the effort of Religion is to keep men peaceable, by reconciling them to their own situations; not to convulse the world by changes, which at best leave just as many injured as were so before. All this is truly represented as the appointment of Providence; and the task enjoined to every man is, to fulfil the duties of that situation in which he has been placed, not to struggle for a change. By such forbearance and such acquiescence, is the Best Right of Man secured.

Is it then, let me enquire most earnestly—is it, or can it be, a doubt with any Christian, to which adviser he should listen; to the Philosopher who counsels him to discontent and rage, or to his Heavenly

Heavenly Master, who inculcates peace and love? the former, offering no reward but the precarious chance of a more perfect human situation; the other, promising the certainty of infinite and everlasting recompense. Let Infidels be deaf to such considerations; let them, as they surely will, deride and mock the question. I write to Christians only; to a Christian People I appeal; and there can be but little doubt in what way they will answer.

I thank God, they have once already answered. Once they have made their choice decidedly, for harmony and union, in preference to tumult and confusion; and, in that choice, they will, I trust, persist, in spite of all attempts to disunite them. They have preferred the glorious Right of Christians to all the fancied Rights of turbulent men; and have resolved to knit the various orders of their state together in confidence, in concord, in the bond of mutual love, and mutual benefits. To persevere in this determination will be to preserve the best of all their Rights; to merit, in this respect, the favour of the Almighty.

To prevent, as far as may be practicable, all chance of a contrary decision, let us put these further questions:—Is it possible that this first and greatest interest should be consistent with the

most atrocious crimes? Is it possible, for example, that it should be consistent with such conduct as the French have held, in their late scenes of anarchy and horror?

Let us, as the fullest answer to such questions, review that conduct, and those scenes.

The Nobility of France had some oppressive Privileges, which it was very just and proper to abolish. The People had a Right to be relieved from such oppressions, in the true sense of Right, that is to say, it was right that they should have relief. But to become oppressors on their part, they could not have a Right;---it could not be right that they should be so. If oppression be an unjust and even an unchristian conduct, it is however less atrocious when exercised in the established form of legal privileges, than when it is the mere effect of arbitrary rage and cruelty. A man may fancy a just Right to Power which he has always had by Law; but a Right to punish innocence, and persecute whole classes for no crime, but that of being born at certain times, in certain situations, can admit no honest plea.—What then was done? The French Nobility were willing at one time to relinquish all their Privileges; but it was too late—willing or unwilling, they had the choice no longer—they were torn from

from them by violence. Here lies the utmost point that can possibly be construed into Justice. The grievances of the People were now redressed; their Task-masters were stripped of all their Power.—This was sufficient for reason, but not for passion: when men redress themselves, they are not satisfied with Justice, they must have Revenge. The Order of Nobility was therefore totally abolished: and many Honours gloriously acquired, and conferred as debts of National Gratitude, were confounded in the general ruin. Whatever had been once distinguished, though for good, was levelled with the ground; and the whole Community reduced to one chaotic mass, in which the worst were as conspicuous as the best, and soon were to be more so. This was injustice and tyranny; but even here the evil did not cease. They who commit injustice, always, for that very reason, hate the persons they have injured. The Nobility, because they had been stripped of Honours and of Privileges, were hated. It was supposed they would resent these injuries, and they were therefore persecuted. Their houses were no longer safe, slander and false accusation pursued them to their castles, where they hoped to have retired from notice. Their retirements were soon violated.—Vast bands of plunderers issued forth against them. Fire, murder, and desolation were the

consequence of mere suspicions;* and when, by various kinds of terror, those whom slaughter did not intercept, were urged to flight, absence was declared a crime, and the plunder of the fugitives enriched their persecutors, or became the guilty property of the State. To compel men to flight, and then to punish them for flying—this was the Justice of a deluded and corrupted People; the Will that they suggested, or adopted. But will not God visit for these things? This question, which a Christian naturally asks, how can it be answered? In the sight of that all-perfect Judge, can the plea of *General Will* excuse a conduct so

* A very imperfect specimen of these cruelties will be sufficient to excite in English breasts the utmost detestation. The following were the first fruits of what they have been pleased to call Liberty:

In Languedoc, M. du Barras cut in pieces in the presence of his wife, who was big with child, and died of terror.

At Mons, M. de Montesson shot to death, after having seen his father-in-law murdered.

In Normandy, a paralytic Gentleman thrown into the fire, and taken out again after his hands were burnt.

A Steward, whose feet were burnt off, to make him give up his Master's Title-deeds. See many other instances in the *Historical Sketch of the French Revolution*, p. 201, &c.

In a few days, one villain, assisted by six thousand followers, burnt seventy-two Gentlemen's houses, and plundered the Churches and small Towns. This was in the neighbourhood of the River Saone. *Ibid.* p. 203.

detestable?

detestable? Far otherwise. The justice of each act, and not the numbers that have willed it, is by him considered. He is the avenger of iniquity in the many, as well as in the few: He can punish multitudes, with all their boasted strength; and distinguish individuals in those multitudes, according to their guilt, notwithstanding their obscurity.

Behold the picture in another light. The French Church had large possessions. Piety and Superstition had, between them, heaped such gifts upon the Clergy, as an age of avarice and irreligion could not bear to see them hold. They were, perhaps, excessive. But what was then to be done? Was it just, or any thing resembling justice, that the present holders of these Revenues, men whose titles to them were completely legal—who had foregone all other plans of life to gain them—and held them under the assurance of the public faith—with as full security as it is possible for society to give, that they should hold them during life; that these men should be stripped at once, and put upon an arbitrary stipend, fixed by enemies, bearing no proportion to their former income, and depending on the very precarious tenure of a Constitution perfectly unsettled; of a Public, which, as it seized at first, might seize again at pleasure? All this, however, was done under the

authority of the first National Assembly, which, in so doing, added to its other crimes, that of ingratitude.† It was done under the pretence of Public Necessity, and was acquiesced in by the People, as all injustice, under such a plea, has regularly been. But this, it seems, was not enough; the majority of the Clergy were speedily driven out from what was thus allowed, by the imposition of an oath directly contrary to the principles of their Church; which all the conscientious thought themselves necessitated to refuse. Thus were all the best of the French Clergy, all who were most likely to defend Religion, and preserve its influence, banished from the country; or, after the most cruel persecutions, miserably slaughtered in the butcheries of August and September 1792. These cruelties have covered half the world with miserable fugitives. Numbers took refuge in va-

† While the disputes continued concerning the union of the orders in one House, a majority of the Clergy joined the Commons in form, with their President at their head, and were affectionately received as Patriots, as men who came in a moment of extreme danger to save them, or to perish in their cause. In the space of a twelvemonth the Clergy were ruined by these very Commons, and reduced to a worse condition than the hostile Nobles themselves. Nothing can efface the impression of the exclamation of a Curé on this subject: "*Did you invite us in the name of the God of Peace, that you might have the surer opportunity of destroying us by Famine?*" Historical Sketch, p. 124 and 5.

rious

rious parts of Europe; numbers by a cruel mercy, were shipped off to Africa, or South America: numbers flew to us for succour. These victims of Conscience are the men whom we have seen so numerous in our streets, destitute of every thing, almost of hope; subsisting on the bounty of a People who, though Enemies to their Church, have sufficient virtue to admire them for their firm adherence to their principles. These are the men whom some ungenerous or ill-informed English would have forbidden us to relieve, because they were French, or because they were Roman Catholics: forgetting that a man who gives up all the comforts and the hopes of life for Conscience sake, whatever be his errors, must be worthy of compassion, must be venerable. Beholding the effects of this atrocious persecution, let any man of any rank, who has the heart and feelings of a Briton, lay his hand upon that heart, and say, in all sincerity, whether such proceedings must not be accursed; or whether it be possible that the Wrath of Heavenly Justice should not finally await a People whose extravagant licentiousness produces or encourages such crimes.—If persecution for Religion's sake be odious, what is it to persecute in the cause of Irreligion? If to do good by evil means be horrible, what is it to effect the worst of purposes by the worst of means? To destroy Religion by inhuman cruelties?

Another

Another scene remains, to give a very imperfect view of these enormities: to display the reign of *Public Will* in France.

The Power of the Crown in that Kingdom was certainly excessive: in many points it was arbitrary; and, with the assistance of a vast standing Army, apparently irresistible. But in Louis XVI. the French had a King who used that power, with respect to his own People, as an Angel might have used it. All the evil that he might have done, he studiously avoided; all the good he could devise, he either did, or tried to do. With a disinterestedness, almost without example, he seemed to take delight in abridging his own Power; and, in every possible instance, proved, that he considered his own advantage, and even his own happiness, as nothing, in competition with the relief and welfare of his People. The public benefits bestowed by him on France, voluntarily, before his Power was in the least abridged, or even threatened, would have been sufficient, in the eyes of a just Nation, to excuse the faults of a licentious Prince; while he, far from wanting that excuse, had private virtues of the heart, sufficient to have made even Ambition amiable.* Under such circumstances,

* M. Necker, in his Reflections, has rapidly sketched out his public benefits and private virtues. "Can you deny,

circumstances, was it not reasonable to suppose that when the Country felt it just to reduce the enormous Power committed to the Crown, the King, who had employed that Power so excellently, would have been respected; that proportionable to his opportunities of turning all that force against the People, would have been their gratitude and love to him for using it at all times well? Was it not reasonable to expect, that, should they even wish to abolish Monarchy, they would, in the wreck of his authority, respect and guard his Person? With these just expectations, how

deny, says he, that his reign has been signalized by various benefits, all of them characteristic of the love he bore to his People? Was it not under his reign, and during the heighth of his authority, that the *Corvées*, the scourge of rural life, were abolished, and converted into a Tax proportioned to men's fortunes? Was it not under his reign that the *Taille*, from being an arbitrary Tax, was rendered fixed for ever? Was it not under his reign that the abolition of personal servitude was brought forward, by the example which he set in all the Royal Domains? Was it not he—was it not this humane, compassionate Prince, who abolished those secret punishments, those odious tortures, calculated to make the unfortunate an evidence against himself, and thereby removed from criminal proceedings all that cruelty by which for ages they had been disgraced? Was it not he who, continually attentive to the improvements of the Prisons and Hospitals, looked with the eye of a tender Father into the abodes of misery, the retreats of error or misfortune? Is it not he who perhaps

how have the facts been dreadfully contrasted! What was the requital of such goodness! Cruel suspicions, amidst the most affecting proofs of candour and sincerity; the suspicions of bad men, who know not what it is to merit confidence; calumnies without end; insults of the most unworthy kinds; imprisonment, embittered by unnecessary harshness; finally, death; unauthorized even by their own unjust Laws: and that death accompanied by every aggravation, torture excepted, that inhumanity could devise: No time allowed for preparation; no alleviations granted; no wishes indulged; but in the very moment

perhaps alone among the Chiefs of France, except St. Louis, has given the rare example of strict purity of morals? Will any one pretend to deny him the singular merit of being religious without superstition, and scrupulous without intolerance? Was it not from him that a part of the inhabitants of France, persecuted in so many reigns, acquired not only protection, but civil rights, and all the advantages of Society? These benefits are past: but to what can the return of gratitude be due, except to past transactions? In a word, among so many actions public and private, all deserving your esteem, who is there that can reproach Louis the XVIth with having, in a single instance, shut his heart against the claims of feeling and compassion? a thousand voices can bring forward instances of his affecting tenderness, a thousand voices will contend to pay him this just testimony;—yet this is the man who has been styled *a Tyrant*." *Reflexions Presentées a la N. Fr.* p. 24.

of

of approaching death, tyranny and insolence exerted. Even after death, to prove their malice inexhaustible, when they could hurt no longer, his enemies continued to insult. To the murdered body the rites of burial were denied, and methods taken to prevent its having them at any future time. Every thing apparently was studied, that could seem degrading to his memory, or could further wound the hearts of his surviving friends and family: And this, the fate of one who never put a man to death unjustly, and whose undoubted praise it was, not only to have hated cruelty, but to have excelled in mildness and humanity.

It may perhaps be said, and not entirely without reason, that for these refinements of iniquity not the whole French Nation, but a few directing villains, must be responsible to heavenly justice. But though the greatest guilt belongs to these, a dreadful share must be attributed to the People, by whose extreme depravity such things were rendered practicable. That People cannot be innocent whose contempt of all Morality called up the worst of men to govern for them; and whose horrid love of blood encouraged crimes which, in a better country, would have been sure to rouse a general indignation, and bring down upon the base

base contrivers the whole weight of public vengeance.*

Sons, and Subjects of Great Britain, hear a solemn Appeal! In the name of that God whom you have not yet denied, I call upon you to beware! Such snares are laid, as are designed to plunge you in the same abyss of guilt. Englishmen! you saw and know the infamous exertions that were made among you, that you might be induced, if possible, to look on France, with all its crimes and horrors, as a fit example for yourselves. You read the daring Addresses which men unworthy to be called your Countrymen presented to our enemies, and those of human nature. You read the Congratulations offered by them on events which disgrace the history of man, and the replies of that Convention which received them as congenial souls, and fixed upon them the everlasting ignominy of its praise.

*Some guilt, and not a little, must belong to a people who, after the inhuman murder of Louis, could see an imitation of his blood worn publicly and triumphantly among them as an ornament. An act of mean unworthy insult to misfortune, and of barbarous exultation in a crime, which is said to have been repeated in Ireland by the Gallic Wife of one whom Courtesy calls *Lord*, but perverted ambition to descend has nick-named *Citizen*.

These things you saw, and read, and know.—Your firmness, loyalty, and virtue, baffled these first efforts. But other schemes remain. Your Republicans have taken a new shape: a specious shape, such as the Arch-tempter always finds, upon occasion, for himself and for his friends. They would make your very virtues the means of your destruction. The word *Reform*, which seems to mean no more than every honest man would ardently desire, is that by which they would seduce you. Your Parliament they tell you is corrupt, it does not represent the People, and therefore ought to be reformed. Beware, however, how you listen to them, for in reforming they would totally deprave your Parliament; instead of representing, they would introduce the People, and inflame them. They tell you of corruptions brought into it by time: though the truth is, that it has never been more uncorruptly formed, perhaps not nearly so much so, in the most glorious periods of your History. The imperfection they pretend to find in it, how would they remove?—the remedy detects the hidden craft of the Republican—By making it express the Will of the whole People. This principle admitted, all will follow that they wish. But be assured that when a People can have all its Will, that Will cannot for an hour escape corruption. Designing men will ever be at hand to inflame the passions of the People, to flatter

flatter and misguide them; and then their Will is wickedness, and only wickedness. You have seen the example in France. By their fruits, and not by specious theories, decide on the two kinds of Representation. France, represented in the way that your *Reformers* reckon perfect, streams with blood; the cries of innocence ascend in peals on every side to call down wrath upon it. I mention not their ruinous Wars, but only their internal state, than which nothing ever was more depraved, nothing ever more wretched;—while these Kingdoms, represented as you know, imperfectly as they alledge; corruptly, as they would have you believe, present a glorious pattern to the world, of all the good that can result from just and equal Laws, from a wise and gentle Government. It is true, your Parliament does not represent this Nation as the Convention represents the French, but it does better. It represents, not the violence, the avarice, the injustice, and inhumanity of the Nation, but its wisdom, moderation, property and honesty. It expresses not, perhaps, the General Will, but, with a sufficient deference to the General Opinion, it expresses what is much more useful to the People than their Will, the Prudence and Sagacity of those who are best able to direct the State. The People may be ruined by their Will, but if a due proportion of abilities and honesty can ward off dangers, they may confide

fide in Parliaments such as they have, and such as they have long enjoyed.

In all the process of political seduction, Republicans have two great objects; to fill the People with wild notions of a right to govern, and then to trust to their own cunning and abilities for governing the People. By the strength of the People, they would overturn all other power, and then employ that very strength in favour of their own authority. The attempt indeed is foolish, in no less degree than it is wicked.—Power once misplaced, is daily changing hands; the first seducers quickly fall a prey to others, and to the violence of that People whom they have thus corrupted; but ambition is too headstrong and too mad to calculate consequences; and the machinations of such men are the result of the most inordinate ambition.

People, be wise! Be on your guard! Such men are flatterers, and would make you tyrants. With the falsehood and the baseness common to all flatterers, they will tell you, that you are the only source of Law—that your Will is irresistible and sacred. But why do they tell you this? Because, like flatterers of Despotic Kings, they mean to govern for you, to make you take their Will for yours, and lead you to whatever mis-

chief they desire to execute. A Flatterer always seeks to make his Master absolute, because a mean appearance of submission costs him nothing, and in the end he gains the power which he attributes to the other. The Tyrant seems to govern all, but he directs the Tyrant. The means and object are the same, whether the Tyrant be a single man, or a whole People. Under limited Monarchies, the most ambitious men become Republicans. Unable to obtain such power by lawful means, they attempt to gain it by deceiving you. The very same men would make the Sovereign absolute, if they were sure to be his Ministers;* but, despairing of that happiness, all the power which Kings ought not to have, they freely give to you, because they mean to be your Ministers: and the more despotic your authority was made, the more they would be able, in your name, and by your means, to tyrannize. Such power they tell you is your Right; they praise you; they attempt to make you mad with pride, that through your pride they may be able to indulge their own. But, I say again, beware!

* Thus we may all recollect, that the boldest attempt at immoderate power that has been made within our memory, was made by one, the usual object of whose life has been to flatter and cajole the People. ARISTOTLE compares a Demagogue to the Flatterer of a Tyrant. *Politics* v. 11.

Pride

Pride is the old, exploded snare of him who is the Enemy of *your best Right*; the means by which both Men and Angels have been ruined. The lesson that your Heavenly Master taught, was just the contrary. It was *Humility*; submission to established Power; contentment, peace, good-will to all mankind.

Consider, People of England! well-intentioned, worthy, conscientious People, if any are so in the world; consider, and observe into what snares these evil Counsellors would lead you. They would wean your hearts from God, and in the place of God they would set up your *Will*, and make you worship it. They call it *Sacred*, *Holy*, and it is the only thing they will allow to be so. But be not made the dupes of such mean flattery. Though not infallible, as they would call you, you are too wise, you know yourselves too well, to think that every thing you wish is therefore holy. You know too well, and you have often made confession of it before God, that your Will is frequently corrupt and foolish, such as you yourselves would afterwards be ashamed and sorry to have had fulfilled. You know you cannot guide the State so well as they who legally direct it. You have not the foolish vanity to think, that you know better what is right and useful than the King and Privy Council, the Ministers, the

House of Lords, assisted by the learned Benches of the Church and Bar; or the House of Commons, composed of men of learned or of liberal education, and of heads known for ability, or long experience in business, law, or politics. What then is your *Will*, that it should rather be obeyed than all this *Wisdom*? God forbid! you certainly will say, if you consider rightly of yourselves, that all should be according to our Will. You know it is not comparable to the Will that now prevails; yet for this sole object your Enemies would have you change the nature of your Parliament.

Observe the progress of these things. Because it does not, as they say, sufficiently express your Will, they would *reform*, that is, they would deform, the House of Commons, according to that principle. Having so done, because the House of Lords does not speak, nor even seem to speak, a Will derived from you, they would destroy it; they must, if they proceeded with consistency, as in the great Rebellion they did actually. A King is equally unfavourable to the views of such Reformers. He is, according to their principles, either unnecessary, or pernicious. If he obey the Will of the People, they could, as they conceive, enjoy it full as well without him;—if he resist that Will, however wisely, he is in their opinion a Tyrant.

Here,

Here, then, the whole is overturned. Your Constitution, the boast of your Country, the envy of the World—a Constitution not formed in haste, according to the whims of shallow Wits, or self-taught Philosophers, but the work of time, of wisdom, and experience, will be destroyed :— And for what ?—Not to make you a great, a rich, a happy, or a free People, for these you are already; but A WILFUL PEOPLE; a People whose Will is their Law, and who in pursuit of that Will despise all Law. Judge if that can be a People acceptable in the sight of God !

Is it not the object both of Law and Gospel to controul the evil wills of men? whose work then do they do who render Will despotic ? Beyond a doubt, the work of him whose object is to make us all ACCURSED. It is the labour of the Devil, who, doubting of his own success, has begged the aid of false Philosophers.

Learn then to understand the true designs of men, though veiled by specious names: and be assured, that by *Friends of the People*, *Friends to this* or *that Right*, or Friends to Rights in general, which either are no Rights, or never were endangered, are usually meant, *Flatterers* of the *People*, *Corruptors of the People*, Friends to the Despotism

of crimes, and to their own ambition. In a word, *the greatest Enemies of a People.**

Suppose, however, their great end obtained; and all the People mad, like froward Children, to have their Will obeyed. Behold the scene that follows. Your House of Commons changed, and filled with Flatterers of the People: your House of Lords destroyed: your Nobles stripped of honours, however greatly earned; of power and property: your Clergy plundered, insulted, banished. Your Churches levelled to the ground,† or made the dens of murderers: Atheists made your Rulers: your Royal Family degraded, or dispersed: all who are too honest to approve these horrors disgraced, robbed, driven to starve in banishment; or murdered here, and massacred by thousands: Finally, to complete the measure of iniquity—my hand refuses to proceed—but look to France, or back to your own History, for what would be by far too probable. And when your land was thus polluted, when the blood of innocence bore shameful testimony against it, what would be the plea? That it was YOUR WILL.

* PLUTARCH has a Treatise on the method of distinguishing a Flatterer from a real Friend; the art requires to be applied to public Flatterers as well as private.

† This has happened to some of the most beautiful Churches in France.

This

This plea will then be true or false. Should it not have been your Will, but only that of wicked men deluding and misguiding you, how wretched will you be to see such crimes, and bear the ignominy of them, while in truth you would have given the world to have prevented them. Should it be your Will—what then can you be reckoned in the sight of God and uncorrupted man, but impious and accursed? and what can you expect from Heaven but indignation, vengeance, and extreme severity of justice?

In a worldly sense, what will you have gained? In the first turn of things, the rich might be made poor, and some few of the poor rich. But here is no redress of Grievances; by such a change the number of the poor is not diminished, it rather is increased. The man made rich by such injustice will not long enjoy his plunder. A new Convulsion may deprive him of it; or he may reflect, that what he has is not his own, and as he has it only by the title of highwayman, the title of force, unless he has the conscience also of a highwayman, he must be wretched: and if he has that conscience, what honest man will not esteem him yet more wretched?

But before such changes can take place, an universal struggle must arise. The rich will not be

plundered peaceably; and, to effect it, one part of the People must be armed against the other.—Contention only can go forward. Perhaps, to make the strife more bloody, the French might be called in, those deep Professors of Inhumanity, to teach completely all their arts of daggers, prisons, pikes, and cruelty.

Of this unnatural state, what could be the consequence? A people fit for universal insurrection, is fit for nothing else. Commerce must be lost, Manufactures interrupted, the Cultivation of the Land neglected, while, instead of forming your swords to ploughshares, as is spoken of a time of blessedness, your ploughshares would be turned to swords, and the hand of every man armed against his neighbour. A Nation all of Soldiers cannot long support itself. You may shed blood in torrents, but you cannot feed upon it. Famine, and the worst extremes of wretchedness must follow; till the crimes of *General Will* were sadly expiated, even in this world, by general punishment.

This is not conjecture, or exaggeration. In all this picture, there is not one touch that has not been completely realized in France. Not one that may not be repeated here, unless you have the virtue to resist the first seductions of the mischievous,

mischievous, to spurn their flatteries, however tempting, and detect their arts, however veiled. Remember that the specious word *Reform* is the first spark of all the train.

In men so demonized as they would have you by pride, by envy, and ambition, who could discern the good, the generous, the just, and gentle character of Britons? Where would be the charity, humility, and brotherly love of Christians? God hath blest you hitherto beyond all people now on earth. Your Arms have prospered every where—your Colonies have overspread the world—your Language is the native tongue of many climates—your Name is held in veneration by Tribes the most remote, and by Nations differing from you in all opinions except those of Natural Justice. And why is this? Because your Principles are such as God approves, and man cannot refuse to praise. Change the whole system, become proud, self-willed, inhuman, ungovernable, and what will be the necessary consequence? But that man will hate, and God will punish you? That you will become despised on earth, and being first exterminated here, be reserved hereafter for severer vengeance?

On the issue of such questions as have now been urged, you are at War. France, with a fanaticism,

fanaticism, of which no nation upon earth but one so mad with vanity, could ever have been capable, has undertaken a Crusade against all Monarchies, against all regular Government.—Because they choose to have no King themselves, that vain and visionary people, would make the world one vast Republic. To have a King, or an Order of Nobility, has become a crime in their opinion; and by every mode of internal intrigue, by every external violence, they would, if possible, compel all Nations to adopt their new-invented fashion of Democracy. They would not only abolish Kings, but, by an arbitrary retrospect, annul all acts that Kings, by the consent of Nations, had established: they would assume to themselves the modest privilege of being Arbiters without appeal, to decide in future what Treaties shall be valid—what intercourse of Public Faith subsist—what limits shall be placed to various Countries—what regulations made to guard their Frontiers or their Commerce. Thus, under the pretence of Natural Rights, they would erect AN UNIVERSAL TYRANNY. They would first in every country, if they could, corrupt the People, and then direct the State. When it came to this, Great Britain, with a spirit worthy of her virtue, consequence, and strength, declared, WE WILL NOT BE CORRUPTED, NOR DIRECTED. What we know, by long experience, to be useful in our

State,

State, we will preserve: what Reason tells us to be just with respect to the general interests of mankind, we will defend. Thus is the present War a new phenomenon, for, besides being a necessary War for self-defence, it is A WAR OF PRINCIPLE—a War in defence of all the Rights of Nations, against the Arbitrary Usurpations of a Gallic Mob—a War to prevent that which would be most destructive to us, the corruption of our Hearts—a War to assert your Right to do your Duty, and obey the Will of God.

Inhabitants of Britain! and of Ireland! on the best Right you have or can acquire, I now have made appeal to your understandings and your consciences: THE RIGHT OF BEING, by such means as Christianity prescribes, THE SONS OF GOD, AND HEIRS WITH CHRIST OF HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM. I have shown you that this Right is incompatible with those false claims that you have long been urged to make. You cannot therefore hesitate in choice between them.

Dream not that if your crimes were great, your numbers could protect you from the vengeance of the Almighty. His justice must give such examples to the Universe as may direct the whole to righteousness. Guilty desires prevailing by mere strength of numbers can give no such example, which

which therefore must be found in the confusion and the punishment of those, however numerous, who thus improperly exalt the General Will.

On this subject St. PETER writes as if expressly with a view to answer all such claims for ever. To show that no combinations of men can reasonably hope by numbers to escape the wrath of the Almighty, he gives an instance in those Beings, which originally were in all things much superior to Mankind. Even the Angels, he says, who sinned, were not spared, but cast down into Hell, and delivered into chains and darkness. He concludes, therefore, that the Lord knoweth how "*to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished; but chiefly those that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness,* AND DESPISE GOVERNMENT. *Presumptuous are they,* SELF-WILLED; *they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*"

Against the authority of an Apostle, no Christian will presume to plead; and if the struggle is to be between the Christians and those who are without Religion, I trust, that, in this Country, even the power of numbers will prevail ten thousand-fold in favour of the Truth, and THE BEST RIGHT OF MAN.

THE END.

ADDITIONAL NOTE.

The design of the French, and their Party here, to introduce Republicanism among us by means of *Reform*, is demonstrated by the Speech of CONDORCET, which has been cited by other Writers; concluding with these words: "The opening of the Session of Parliament which approaches, will infallibly become the occasion of the *Reforms* which are the most urgent; such as *those which regard the National Representation*; *from thence to the entire establishment of* A REPUBLIC."— But that some of our Speculators in Politics in this Country go still farther, and would destroy *property*, and all other ties, appears from a paper published by M. DELAMETHERIE, a French Philosopher, at the end of the Journal de Physique for November 1792. He writes thus:

"I have already seen Petitions printed in English, which say expressly, *we must break the iron yoke of* PROPERTY, *and establish the Community of Goods*. Some Deputies from popular Societies in England, *have told me*, that we ought no longer to acknowledge *Property*; that we ought *to establish the Community of Women*, and *have all Children educated by the Country*."— Knowing what Deputies from English Societies have visited France, we can guess who uttered these sentiments.